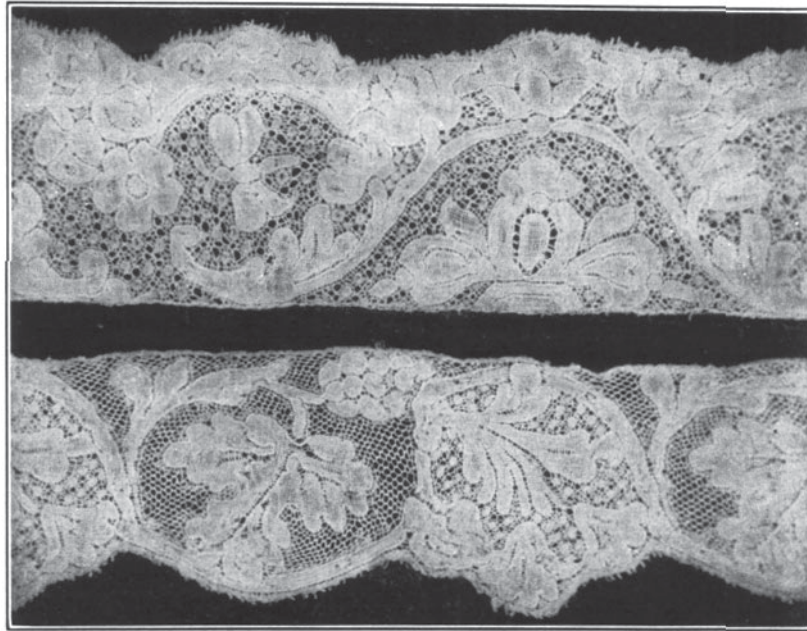


LACES OF MECHLIN TYPE WORN ON BOHEMIAN PEASANT CAPS.



## BOHEMIAN LACE BONNETS

ABBIE C. MAHIN

**T**HE accompanying photographs are of some of the Mechlin lace I have in the National Museum in Washington, all of which came from Reichenberg, the center of a large district of Bohemia.

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the women of this district wore very beautiful, heavily embroidered, gold and silver bonnets with lace borders. The rank of the woman was indicated by the quality of the lace and the height of the border at the crown, and the bonnets were handed down from mother to daughter. This picturesque headgear is no longer worn, and when I was in Bohemia eighteen years ago, the antique dealers were cutting up the heavy gold and silver embroidery and melting it for the sake of the metal. The lace I was able to buy was at very reasonable prices. The gold and silver bonnets were worn on occasions of ceremony, such as weddings, et cetera, and at church. For ordinary wear in fine weather, there were white bonnets wonderfully worked with knots—with lace borders; and for rainy days, black embroidered ones with black lace borders.



The wide Mechlin lace of the two photographs has a réseau of two braided sides and four twisted ones, and is four inches wide. I have never found these two designs of Mechlin lace in any Flemish or Belgian plates and have always felt that these wide Mechlin laces used on the gold bonnets, might have been made in the mountains of Bohemia; or, if not, that they might have been made in Mechlin especially for the Bohemian trade. I had a friend in Reichenberg who had a large portrait of her grandmother, wearing an Empire gown and a gold bonnet with this same design of Mechlin lace. This friend had given to the Reichenberg Museum the gold bonnet with the lace still on it.

She told me that she and her mother had bought fine real lace from an old man who came from the mountains of Bohemia every spring with whatever lace, either bobbin or needle, the people had made during the winter, and his father had come before him to sell to her grandmother and friends. As it happened, the old man came while I was there and I bought from him a handkerchief of the most perfect Point de Gaze I have ever seen; but he told me there was no one then living in the mountains who could make the finest bobbin laces, such as I had; but they could make any fine needle lace.

